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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 008259

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SUBJECT: IRAQ SUNNI OUTREACH: AMBASSADOR KHALILZAD'S AMMAN MEETINGS WITH IRAQI POLITICAL AND TRIBAL FIGURES

REF: AMMAN 2796

Classified By: DAVID HALE, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, REASONS: 1.4 (B &D)

Summary

1. (C) U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Khalilzad pursued Iraqi Sunni outreach in Amman October 3 through a series of meetings with Iraqi political and tribal figures, including a small group of prominent ex-Ba'athists presented to him by former Prime Minister Allawi; Sheikh Dari al-Fassal, an Iraqi tribal leader from Mosul who is the brother-in-law of Saudi King Abdullah; and with Hassib al-Aref, a Sunni Arab member of the Constitution Drafting Committee who heads a small non-sectarian movement. Khalilzad stressed recent efforts to deal with Sunni Arab concerns over the draft Constitution. He asked for help in encouraging Sunnis to support the Constitution, participate in the December election, and back moderate, nationalist, and non-sectarian candidates and coalitions. All interlocutors agreed that the December election is crucial, and agreed to encourage widespread Sunni turnout. Sheikh Dari and the former Ba'athist group also indicated a willingness to publicly support the new Constitution, though Dari later qualified this by insisting that a statement declaring that "Iraq is a member of the Arab world" be added to the text. Dari also agreed to cooperate with Ambassador Khalilzad in organizing a meeting of key Sheikhs. End Summary.

Ex-Ba,athists Ready to Accept the Constitution

2. (C) At the suggestion of former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad met on October 3 in Allawi's Amman office with a small group of veteran former Ba,athist leaders, including Farouk Awni, Khalid Tabra, and Mahmud Bashi. Allawi described them as trusted "old friends." Speaking for the group, Awni read a long prepared statement to the effect that most ex-Ba,athis are not associated with Saddam,s crimes and are educated, patriotic Iraqis who accept democracy and want only to live normal lives. Ironically, he claimed, mass dismissals of Ba'athist rank and file from government jobs, and similar ongoing "persecution" has brought ex-Baathist party members closer together than they ever were when they ruled the country. He deplored continued persecution of ex-Ba,athis who have not committed crimes. He also noted their concern that Iraq remains unified, and that Iranian infiltration end.

3. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad observed that Iraq is passing through a very difficult transition. The new Iraq needs to be inclusive, pursue good relations with its neighbors, and reject all forms of extremism and terrorism. Khalilzad, stressing the need for an "accountability and reconciliation" process, stated that there should be no problem with full re-integration of ex-Ba,athist party members not guilty of serious crimes, or were not senior members of the party, into Iraqi society. He provided the group with copies of recent proposed revisions to the new Constitution. The revisions clarify that "former members of the Ba,ath party who were not senior leaders and who did not commit crimes" shall enjoy equality and protection, including full political rights.

4. (C) Farouk and the group lauded the new constitutional language on the rights of ex-Ba,athis, and agreed that the December election is crucial. They also stressed that they want good relations with the U.S. and an end to confrontation. Allawi,s staff subsequently passed word to Khalilzad that the group has decided to issue a public statement supporting the new Constitution as an acceptable stepping-stone to the crucial December elections. Bolstering Tribal Contacts

5. (C) Khalilzad also called on Sheikh Dari al Fassal al Jarba from Mosul, a leader of the Shammar tribe in Iraq who has been living in Amman over the past year. Note: Dari is the brother-in-law of Saudi Arabia,s King Abdullah and the uncle of Prince Mish,al. He has a wide network of tribal and clerical contacts throughout Iraq, and has been working assiduously with Talal al-Gaaod and others since late 2004 on defeating extremism and returning stability to Iraq. In recent months he has worked closely with (Jordan) King

Abdullah, s tribal affairs advisor, and as an informal conduit between the Jordanian and Saudi rulers. Dari also attended Ambassador Khalilzad, s September roundtable with Sunni tribal leaders in Amman (ref b). End note.

16. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad outlined to Dari his recent trip to Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E., and explained that he is currently focusing on key tasks: obtaining additional revisions to the draft Constitution to address Sunni concerns, encouraging Sunni participation in the December election, and promoting an alliance between moderate nationalist leaders and movements that will work toward a unified, stable, and prosperous Iraq. Khalilzad enumerated the recent proposed revisions to the Constitution dealing with federalism, de-Ba'athification, right of citizenship, and Iraq, s Arab identity, and asked if Dari would be prepared to come to Baghdad on October 10 for a meeting of inter-ethnic leaders who will endorse the Constitution.

17. (C) Dari praised the recent revisions and expressed willingness to come to the Baghdad meeting and bring other Iraqi tribal figures with him. Note: He subsequently made this agreement dependent on insertion of language stating, "Iraq is a member of the Arab world." End Note. Dari also promised to promote emergence of a moderate, non-sectarian leadership and encourage a large Sunni voter turnout in the December election. Dari noted that, working with Talal al-Ga'ad and others, he has already scored significant success behind the scenes in strengthening the moderate Sunni Waqf against the Islamic Scholars Council and its confrontational leader, Harith al-Dhari.

Stabilizing Tal Afar

18. (C) Dari praised Khalilzad, s efforts to move Iraq forward and expressed appreciation for Khalilzad, s understanding of Iraq, s tribal nature and of the Iraqi mentality. He cited the Tal Afar episode as a typical example of a problem that arose out of misunderstanding and manipulation of U.S. forces by outsiders tied to SCIRI. Note: Dari spent two weeks in the Tal Afar area visiting with tribal leaders in early July. End Note.

19. (C) Dari asked Ambassador Khalilzad to attend a notional meeting that Sheikh Dari will set up with Tal Afar area tribal leaders, and asked that Khalilzad bring key U.S. regional military figures with him. Dari said that he wants Khalilzad to explain how the insurgency facilitates Iran, s agenda, and works against the people - "tell them that Zargawi gives money, but will go away, while the U.S. and Iraq will stay." He also stressed the importance of dealing with hunger and offering employment and other legitimate sources of money to the impoverished Tal Afar people. Ambassador Khalilzad acknowledged that the U.S. had made some "mistakes" in understanding the background of the Tal Afar situation, welcomed Dari, s offer, and agreed to attend the notional meeting.

Meeting with Hassib al-Obeidi

10. (C) Khalilzad, s final outreach meeting was with Sunni Constitution drafter (and a former Saddam Hussein international relations advisor) Hassib Aref al-Obeidi (ex-Prime Minister Allawi was also present). Note: Hassib is a Sunni Arab from Kirkuk who heads a small political movement with a moderate, democratic, and Iraqi nationalist platform. According to Talal al-Ga'ad, he has recently worked closely with Saleh Mutlak and Sa'ad al-Janabi. End Note. Hassib told Ambassador Khalilzad that the draft Constitution was acceptable with minor changes, one of which, a clarification that rules on citizenship will be regulated by law, the Ambassador said he has already agreed to support. Hassib also wanted a statement that Iraq is part of the Arab world, and elimination of specific references to "Saddamite" Ba'athists.

11. (C) Hassib asserted that the Constitution is going to be ratified in any event, and said that his main focus is on the December election. In that respect he asked that the U.S. pay close attention to issues of voting logistics and "fairness." Khalilzad assured him that we are very conscious of this need. Hassib said that Allawi will be the next Prime Minister, and promised to support him, but not necessarily to join his pre-election coalition. He claimed to have recently met with the Syrian Prime Minister, and opined that U.S. suspicions of active Syrian support for Zargawi are "exaggerated." He asserted that Iran, not Syria, is the "Silk Road of al-Qaeda." Hassib warned against launching large-scale military operations in the run-up before the referendum, claiming that some Sunnis will see this as referendum-related intimidation. Khalilzad assured Hassib that any operations held prior to the referendum will be limited, highly focused in scope, and carried out with the active cooperation and support of local people.

